

# DSHS/DVR 2016 – 2020 State Plan

## Coordination with Education

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### **Draft Federal Guidance**

Describe:

1. The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.
2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:
  - a. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
  - b. transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;
  - c. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
  - d. procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

## **Introduction**

The 2014 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 profoundly enhance expectations for coordination between the designated state unit (DSU) and education officials to provide early job exploration and work-based learning opportunities for secondary students with disabilities.

To that end, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DSHS/DVR) has developed a long-range plan to develop and strengthen the education-vocational rehabilitation infrastructure for the coming four years.

## **Pre-employment Transition Services**

With the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) mandate that state vocational rehabilitation programs allocate 15% of federal funds to provide five required Pre-employment Transition Services (PETS) to all students with disabilities, it is imperative that DSHS/DVR develops a strategic, thoughtful, and intentional plan to meet the needs of secondary students with disabilities statewide. These five required activities include 1) job exploration; 2) information regarding post-secondary opportunities at institutions of higher education; 3) self-advocacy instruction; 4) work readiness training; and 5) work-based learning.

The draft Codes of Federal Regulations (CFRs) have expanded the population of students who receive services from DSHS/DVR. Secondary students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans who receive PETS may be either eligible for DSHS/DVR services or potentially eligible for services. PETS are provided as generalized services to groups of eligible or potentially eligible students with disabilities, or as individualized and intensive services for students with higher support needs.

Previously, DSHS/DVR has recommended that students engage services in their second-to-last or last year of high school. WIOA draft CFRs specifically note that services may begin as early as age 14, if students have transition IEPs. While not all students receiving PETS will apply for DSHS/DVR services, early engagement is expected and encouraged.

Students with higher support needs may apply for DSHS/DVR services and receive PETS on an individualized basis. These students are able to receive PETS in services to groups while concurrently receiving individualized services from DSHS/DVR. Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) for students and youth with disabilities may include projected or generally described employment goals.

## **Coordinated Services for Students and Youth: Goals & Objectives**

### **Strengthen and enhance the DSHS/DVR and education agency partnership at state and local levels so that students receive a seamless continuum of transition services.**

- Work with the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to include guidelines and expectations for coordinating the provision of PETS and other transition services.
- Update DSHS/DVR's Memorandum of Understanding with OSPI to include definitive federal guidance regarding the provision of PETS and required coordination with education entities.
- Develop memoranda of understanding for transition services with local education agencies, through Washington's nine Educational Service Districts, which includes delineation of respective roles and responsibilities, including the financial responsibilities, of each entity.
- Provide vocational rehabilitation training and technical assistance to local education agency teachers and staff regarding post-school transition planning.
- Partner with the Center for Change in Transition Services to:
  - Establish interagency transition councils in each Educational Service District that include local DSHS/DVR and educational staff and community partners.
  - Develop pilot transition projects in each Educational Service District.
  - Develop and provide individual online education portfolios that provide updated educational and employment progress for students.
  - Provide training and technical assistance to DSHS/DVR staff, teachers, and community partners.
  - Provide gap analysis and outcome data regarding coordinated services between DSHS/DVR and local education agencies.
  - Partner with education and community partners to present a yearly statewide transition conference, beginning in 2017, that is focused on services to all students with disabilities.

### **Increase student access to group and individualized transition services from DSHS/DVR.**

- Assign DSHS/DVR counselors and staff as liaisons to individual schools, and provide training and technical assistance to staff in building and maintaining established presence in schools.
- Provide DSHS/DVR Student and Youth Transition Handbooks to students, families, teachers, and community partners.
- Develop interagency agreements and service contracts with organizations to provide group-based PETS.
- Develop statewide PETS provision agreements with higher education, including building PETS programs in partnerships with trades and technical schools, community colleges, and four-year universities.

- Develop and maintain a DSHS/DVR student transition website that provides information for students and their families, DSHS/DVR staff, and school personnel.
- Provide ongoing transition best practices guidance, training and technical assistance to DVR supervisors, counselors, and staff. Guidance will include policy regarding ensuring that student access to individualized services is provided in a simple and engaging manner, that students may be served earlier than the second to last or last year of high school in order for them to more adequately prepare for post-secondary employment, and that summer work-based learning experiences are provided for students as part of PETS.
- Increase outreach to students in traditionally unserved and underserved disability populations, including those with 504 plans, those with emotional-behavioral challenges, students who are deaf or hearing, those who have specific learning disabilities, as well as other disability populations who often do not receive services. Outreach activities include media, opportunities for participation in group-based PETS activities, individual outreach at schools, DVR relationship building and coordination with education officials, presentations and career fairs for students, youth, families, schools, and community partners.
- Increase outreach to students in traditionally unserved and underserved populations that include tribal youth, justice-involved youth, homeless youth, and students and youth receiving foster care. Outreach activities include media, opportunities for participation in group-based PETS activities, individual outreach at schools, DSHS/DVR relationship building and coordination with education officials, presentations and career fairs for students, youth, families, schools, and community partners.
- Solicit proposals for Project Search development, and become a funding partner with current Project Search programs in Washington State that serve students with disabilities.
- Strengthen DSHS/DVR participation in current School-to-Work programs statewide by providing increased training and technical assistance for School-to-Work partners, including earlier DVR input into assessment and employment planning for students.
- Contract with Centers for Independent Living to enhance and expand core independent living services, focusing on youth with significant disabilities. In addition to core services, Centers for Independent Living have been focusing on outreach to increase services in unserved or underserved geographic areas. Additional outreach efforts include targeted disability groups, minority groups, and urban or rural populations with the focus on youth with significant disabilities and 504 plans. The goal is to create a safe environment in which youth feel comfortable and confident when talking to allies. This goal will be accomplished by enhancing youth understanding of the Independent Living philosophy, successful self-advocacy, and how engage with legislators about disability issues.